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Our Modern Sensibility

BROTHER ANTONINUS

The Identity of James Baldwin

JAMES FINN

Guilt and the Postwar German Novel

BRUCE COOK

The Brothers Goncourt

MARTIN TURNELL

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Literature and the Arts

Although it is most widely known and appreciated in this country as a journal of opinion edited by Catholic laymen—with an emphasis on public affairs—The Commonweal is highly regarded as well for the quality of its comment on present-day writing and the contemporary arts.

The articles of James Finn on James Baldwin, Martin Turnell on the Goncourts, Bruce Cook on the postwar German novelists and Brother Antoninus on Sensibility in this Fall Book Number are typical of the coverage provided in the special literary issues which The Commonweal publishes several times each year. And over and beyond these special issues, literary articles are a regular feature in our pages.

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

Cuba a Neighbor

ONCE AGAIN—the spectacle which Cuba presents of a rising Communist military power just off the coast of Florida is an alarming one indeed. Yet it is not half so alarming at the moment as the drastic measures of immediate and unilateral action urged by what seems to be a majority of America's press and public opinion. For Cuba, for all its power to upset, certainly does not yet pose "a clear and present danger" to the United States or to the hemisphere. But proposals for "military intervention" and a "naval blockade," coming from Senators and news editors, certainly do pose such a danger.

The President has already heeded these counsels of alarm to the extent of ordering reprisals on foreign shipping interests doing business between Communist-bloc countries and Cuba, reprisals which (to the degree that they are wrong-headed) have already brought the condemnation of Great Britain. Before the emotional impetus of November's elections gives the movement to "do something about Cuba" an irresistible acceleration, however, it would be well to recall the true context of the Cuban situation. For to recall that context is at once to put down the lust for an immediate "solution" and to take a more hopeful, if longer, view.

The context of the Cuban situation is, quite simply, the hemisphere. In that sense it must not become the private obsession of the United States. The recent statement of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Latin America, meeting informally with Secretary Rusk, ought to make it plain that these countries *do* recognize in Cuba "an attempt to convert the island into an armed base for Communist penetration of the Americas and subversion of the democratic institutions of the hemisphere." But the Latin American nations are just as firm in their insistence that the situation in Cuba at the present time does not call either for military intervention or for an all-out economic blockade.

At this point it may be advisable to warn well-meaning countrymen that a "naval blockade," in the authoritative terms of International Law, is "an act of belligerency" which warrants armed resistance. Such preemptory action would wreck our common aims in Latin America and, incidentally, our hopes for a peaceful outcome to Berlin.

CONSIDERING the hemisphere's joint resolutions in face of the Cuban situation, all of the recent fervent discussion about our "commitment" to the Monroe Doctrine appears all the more strained and pointless. Beyond that, the use of the Monroe Doctrine by a leading weekly news magazine as a text to exhort armed aggression against Cuba shows that the Doctrine is really dangerously applied to the complexities of the nuclear age. Aside from the fact, as has been well demonstrated by now, that the Monroe Doctrine is a "two-way street" (which could be used to condemn our own bases in Turkey as well as the Russian bases in Cuba), we have simply outgrown it. We must allow our policies toward Cuba now to be guided rather by the Charter of the Organization of American States, which stipulates that any action to be taken against Communist designs upon this hemisphere will, and of right ought to be, joint action. Our long-range program for the hemisphere must continue to be guided by the terms of the Alliance for Progress. That the Alliance has so far not realized our best hopes for it is no argument against taking steps to make it more effective in the future. As it is, the Monroe Doctrine can now only be an instrument of that private obsession which we indulge further only at extreme hazard to all of our neighbors.

Our new and greater participation in the program of the hemisphere makes it, however, all the more imperative that President Kennedy join with the other Latin American nations in a clear and unambiguous statement of the line which we will

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draw in the military build-up of Cuba, beyond which we will resist any further movement "by force of arms." If we can take a lesson from the past, it is only such a firm commitment to a line on the part of the West which succeeds in preventing the Soviets from overstepping it in advance.

Yet even in the face of such gratuitous and inflammatory speeches as that of President Dorticos Torrado recently at the UN, we must not lose sight of the fact that Cuba is our neighbor. Granted that she is not at present a "good neighbor," still it would be a perilous short-sightedness that sought to isolate the Cuban people in their present crisis, to make of Cuba an island "entire of itself."

In past crises America, in spite of original rebellion, has not disdained to listen to the advice of the mother country. At this time the advice may come in the form of a question put to the American people in a recent issue of the British weekly, *The Economist*. That question is "how American public opinion is going to stand up to the inevitably prolonged strain of an east-west contest that may go on . . . for a generation or more—a timeless test, not a short, sharp, world series match." No comforting answer to that disturbing question can be forthcoming. A hesitant start toward an answer can be made only if we succeed in realizing further the program of the Alliance for Progress, in such a way that Cuba will gradually be obliged to have recourse to the Alliance herself.

A Moving Address

OF ALL THE eloquent addresses of Pope John XXIII, few have been so moving or so impressive as the one delivered at the opening of the Council. To be sure, the day itself was a glorious one, marked by a brilliant display of all the ceremonial splendor which the Church can bring to bear on its great events. But Pope John's discourse outshone even that splendor, bringing to the occasion a fitting, salutary and unusually optimistic statement of the spirit which should animate the Council, the great needs of mankind, and the ever-necessary tasks of the Church.

Most moving, perhaps, was the Pope's denial that our age is one in which nothing can be seen "but prevarication and ruin." On the contrary, "In the present order of things, Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations, which, by men's own efforts and even beyond their expectations, are directed toward the fulfillment of God's superior and inscrutable designs; and everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church."

In this respect, the Pope made clear that the Church is, and must be, totally involved in the contemporary world. Emphasizing the fundamental obligation of the Church to remain true to the deposit of faith entrusted to it, Pope John asserted no less strongly that the Church "must ever look to the present, to new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world. . . ." As an instance of the ways in which the Church can confront even the dangers of the modern world in a constructive and charitable manner, he pointed out that the Church now eschews the way of condemnation and attack: "Nowadays . . . the spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. . . ." And, significantly, the Pope referred to some of the handicaps felt by the Church when it was in the past too closely bound to the state.

Amidst the Pope's general aspirations for the unity of mankind, he did not neglect to allude to the divisions which exist among Christians. Indeed, he sees in the "prayers and ardent desires" of those separated from the Church the power of Christ's desire for unity being made manifest. Yet what seems noteworthy about the Pope's desire for Church unity is that he so clearly places it within the context of universal human unity; his address was a valuable reminder that Christian unity is but one aspect of the unity which Christ desires.

However splendid the opening ceremonies and however confident and serene the Pope's address, two unhappy realities cast something of a shadow over the day. The first was the fact that a number of bishops from behind the iron curtain were not allowed to attend the Council. The second was the announcement by the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church that it would send no observers to the Council. Coming close on the heels of the agreement of the Russian Orthodox Church to send observers, this was distressing and puzzling news. During the preparatory stages of the Council, there was considerable optimism about the possibility that the Council could make important progress in healing the wounds left by the Orthodox separation. The decision of the Greek Orthodox Church can only serve to dampen that hope.

Eighty-seventh Congress

WHEN THE second session of the Eighty-seventh Congress drew to a close and Congressmen up for re-election hastened back to their local constituents, the usual debate ensued. President Kennedy, rushing from one state to another in support of Democratic candidates, stressed what Congress had ac-

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complished. He contends that if the electorate will only increase his party's already sizable majority in both Houses, the Administration can then do even better.

In some ways the legislation enacted comprises an impressive list. In 1961 there were such achievements as the raising and extending of the minimum wage, the distress-areas act and extension of social security. This year Congress gave the President what he most sought for, the trade expansion act. Moreover it put through bills on public works and worker retraining, drug reform, increased space and defense programs, housing for the elderly, the Constitutional Amendment outlawing the poll tax, and (in reduced form) foreign aid.

These bear comparison with the Administration bills that have been defeated. Most prominent—and a subject that makes a lively campaign issue—was medicare, or provision of special medical care for the aged. Others which came a cropper in the Eighty-seventh Congress were aid to higher education, major tax reform, aid to the nation's cities and to metropolitan transport, federal aid to education and full-fledged modification of the government's program of crop supports.

There is a stamp of the New Frontier about a number of enactments, as there is about the success and expansion of the Peace Corps and the growth of the Alliance for Progress. What makes all this more remarkable is the handicaps that had to be overcome. House and Senate majority leaders were ineffectual in comparison with the late Sam Rayburn and Vice President Lyndon Johnson. A cumbersome committee-subcommittee system still prevails, with too much power concentrated in senior chairmen lacking the vision called for in a changing world. And often the alliance between Northern Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats presented an insurmountable obstacle.

When Senator Kennedy campaigned for the Presidency, one of his most telling points was to emphasize the connection between conditions in the United States and our success in the cold war. He contended that the uncommitted peoples would look to us rather than the Sino-Soviet axis only if we were able to demonstrate to their satisfaction that the American way spelled justice, growth, security. He therefore bemoaned the stagnation that had beset the American economy in recent years. But a sluggish pace has continued quite in contrast to the productive momentum of the Soviets and the economic expansion of Western Europe.

Perhaps it has not yet been demonstrated conclusively that our federal government can by legislation and administrative decree stimulate the national economy in the way needed. But Washington has more information at its disposal, and more mechanisms for taking action, than ever before. It has available all sorts of tax and credit incentives and is aware that such substantial needs as urban and rural housing, schools, transportation and hospitals remain unmet. The lack of major efforts to put new life into our economy at a time when most needed serves to overbalance the avowed aspirations of the Kennedy Administration and what genuine accomplishments there were on the part of the Eighty-seventh Congress.

Mr. Buckley Goes West

AS READERS of The Commonweal are probably aware, we have always been a little defensive about having our office on the reactionary East coast. For years we have gazed wistfully at those greener pastures west of the Alleghenies where, so we have been told, all the dynamic developments in American Church life were bursting forth, where men are men and liturgy is liturgy.

But of late our confidence has been restored, at least in one respect. What has done it has been our reading, in otherwise commendably advanced mid-Western diocesan papers, of a number of intense and painfully soul-searching columns on The Meaning of William F. Buckley, Jr. There is a certain drama in these columns: liberal is pitted against liberal, tough-minded anti-Buckleyites versus tender-minded anti-Buckleyites, advocates of a hot war against Mr. Buckley opposed to believers in coexistence with him. The occasion for these columns would appear to be Mr. Buckley's increasing forays into the great plains states. Not only has Mr. Norman Mailer felt his force in Chicago, the residents of Kansas City and other prairie settlements have been exposed as well.

Why should this restore our confidence in the East? Well, the plain truth of the matter is that we once went in our early youth through a like phase of analyzing Mr. Buckley. We peered into the recesses of our conscience to see if we were giving him a fair shake, we talked incessantly among ourselves about his essential being, we never missed one of his "Open End" shows, and we instantly arose to the consummate challenge of his *National Review* editorials. Like our brethren beyond the Hudson we too were afflicted by a seemingly unshakable fascination. So we understand. But that was years ago (or maybe last year). Now, a vast sense of ennui on the subject has settled on us. We still enjoy Mr. Buckley in a minor sort of way. But fascination? No, the great wave has swept westward and we have turned to other things.

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Criticizing the Critics

HERE we go again. Filling in for the Council-bound Monsignor George G. Higgins, Chicago sociologist Father Andrew M. Greeley uses his guest column to take up the subject of self-criticism. "It has," he writes, "been a grand and glorious season for self-criticism," and among the examples he cites are two ventures in which I had a hand, The Commonweal's series on the Council and the Thomas More-Rosary College symposium at which I talked on the theology of the laity.

Father Greeley is not opposed to self-criticism in general. But, he says, "it does not follow that all its manifestations are useful or relevant." It is not that Father Greeley disputes the accuracy of the criticism; "one could agree with practically all the charges made by the current crop of viewers-with-alarm and still doubt that they are presenting a balanced picture of American Catholicism." What the critics are ignoring, Father Greeley thinks, is the rapid rate at which change is occurring. And perhaps with a little overstatement of his own Father Greeley excepts only Monsignor John Tracy Ellis from the charge that as far as The Commonweal series on the laity and the Council was concerned, "despair would be a cheerful description of most of the writers involved."

Let me say at the outset that I think self-criticism does raise problems. Such criticism must not be contentious; it must not be bitter; it must be based on love of and loyalty to the Church. If it is anything else, it is worthless. But I think The Commonweal series and the Thomas More-Rosary College symposium, in which Father Greeley also participated, reflected that spirit.

A critic has to expect to get a dose of his own medicine every now and then, of course. There's nothing wrong with that. As Harry Truman once put it, "If you can't stand the heat, you should get out of the kitchen." And Father Greeley is quite right in citing the great progress that has been made in the last ten or fifteen years—in the liturgical movement, in the specialized Catholic Action movements, in the Sister formation movement, and many others. But the point is that this progress has largely been prompted by self-criticism—and that at every stage along the way there was someone like Father Greeley to cry out that the critics were painting too black a picture.

The trouble with the critics, Father Greeley thinks, is that they have a very static view of the Church in America; they show no awareness of the rapid rate at which change is occurring. But this critic, at least, thinks he knows how fast things are changing, in the Church and in the world. Indeed, it is precisely because this is a crucially important period of transition that it is imperative that there be no slackening of our efforts now, no resting on our oars as we tell ourselves how well we have done. I don't think anyone denies that we have come a long way; the fact still remains that we have much further to go.

In 1959 Father Greeley himself faced the critic's perennial problem when he wrote *The Church and the Suburbs*. Anticipating that he would be criticized for leaving out "vast areas of brightness," he wrote then: "If they are not emphasized as much as are some of the darker aspects of the same picture, it is not because they are thought to be unimportant or irrelevant, but merely because the purpose of the book is not to pay compliments or describe happy living, but rather to ask questions and pose problems."

In 1962, however, Father Greeley is worried, not that the critics will give "aid and comfort to the enemy," as he puts it, but that they will discourage their followers and even themselves. I really don't think that's the major problem, though. In my view the central and discouraging problem is what Father Greeley and his fellow-sociologists might call a culture lag in American Catholic life. The liturgical movement, the lay mission effort, the Catholic Action movements—these things have grown mightily in the last ten or fifteen years, undeniably. But they still represent a small if important part of American Catholic life.

It is a long way from the average parish to Rome, and sometimes it seems further than it really is. The country is still full of parishes where the liturgical movement might as well not exist; the country is still full of Catholic schools where the parents' role is to be seen but not heard. And if Father Greeley thinks the lay potential in the American Church is being used in any really substantial way, he is certainly not hearing from the people I do.

Father Greeley points out that the American Church is vast and that some problems are more serious in certain localities than in others. Some of us, he notes, may be generalizing too easily from unfortunate local experiences. The point is delicately put, and I will not argue it. However, Father Greeley then goes on to suggest that the level of optimism in our circle might be raised considerably if only "a foundation would provide a week's vacation for the entire staff of The Commonweal in, let us say, the Diocese of Oklahoma City-Tulsa."

This is a delightful notion, and I am sure that all of us here would enjoy and profit from the experience. But this thing works two ways, and I also do not doubt that Father Greeley's views would be rather different if h had sat where I have for the last ten years. I may be wrong, but I have a feeling that some of the mail we receive might surprise him.

JAMES O'GARA

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In Hart Crane, an Awesome Witness to the Complex Poetic Image

Our Modern Sensibility

BROTHER ANTONINUS

"THE SYMBOLIC imagination," Allen Tate has written, "conducts an action through analogy, of the human to the divine, of the natural to the supernatural, of the low to the high, of time to eternity." "It is," he added, ". . . . the way of the poet, who has got to do his work with the body of this world, whatever that body may look like to him, in his time and place . . . . If the poet is able to put into this moving body, or to find in it, a coherent chain of analogies, he will inform an intuitive act with symbolism; his will be in one degree or another the symbolic imagination."

Over against this Tate posits the angelic imagination: "The angelic mind suffers none of the limitations of sense; it has immediate knowledge of essences; and this knowledge moves through the perfect will to divine love, with which it is at one . . . . I call that human imagination angelic which tries to disintegrate or to circumvent the image in the illusory pursuit of essence. When human beings undertake this ambitious program, divine love becomes so rarefied that it loses its human paradigm . . . . It professes to know nature as essence at the same time that it has become alienated from nature in the rejection of its material forms."

It is the deterioration in poetry from the symbolic imagination of medieval Christian man as typified by Dante, to the pseudo-angelic imagination of modern man as typified by Crane, that Tate deplores. For Dante's secret (the secret of "natural inevitable images —the girl in the street, the people he knew, the language he learned as a child") is a secret "which is not necessarily available to the Christian poet today. The Catholic faith has not changed since Dante's time. But the Catholic sensibility as we see it in modern Catholic poetry, from Thompson to Lowell, has become angelic, and is not distinguishable (doctrinal differences aside) from poetry by Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and atheists. I take it that more than doctrine, even if the doctrine be true, is necessary for a great poetry of action. Catholic poets have lost, along with their heretical friends, the power to start with the 'common thing': they have lost the gift for concrete experience."

BROTHER ANTONINUS is a Dominican lay brother and a well-known poet. His latest book of poetry, *The Hazards of Holiness*, was recently reviewed in these pages.

Tate assumes that if there is a disintegration of the image in modern poetry, it is because "the modern poet, like Valéry or Crane, tries to seize directly the anagogical meaning, without going through the three preparatory stages of letter, allegory, and trope."

But introspection does not bear this out, at least in the instance of Crane. When one reflects upon one's response to a line of Crane one discovers that it carries a certain authentic satisfaction: "O thou steeled cognizance whose leap commits/The agile precincts of the lark's return." The reason it satisfies cannot be because it succeeded in directly seizing the anagogical meaning of the image, because that is not possible to the human mind. On the contrary, it satisfies because the complexity of experience in modern life constellates upon the image more than the simple statement of images can realize, so that the poet, imaginatively registering their effect upon him, establishes not the simple image but the image plus its historic accumulation of associations.

WE CAN SEE this when we consider the nature of the phantasm in the process of human intellection. The phantasm is not simply the visual image modified by many factors. It is first modified by its conjunction with other sensory accompaniments, such as smell, hearing, taste, touch. It is further modified by reference to the memory, wherein the past associations connected with this particular image are preserved. It is finally modified by references to the imagination where the potentiality of this modified image is at last projected into the possible. It is only this, the total phantasm, which the intellect judges—not the simple visual image, the denotative thing, but the image as modified and augmented by all the connotative action of memory-imagination.

This, therefore, is the phantasm that the modern poet registers in his complex idiom, a phantasm bound to be substantially more complex than the phantasm of Dante. His function is not to disintegrate the image in order to extract its anagogical meaning, but simply to do what Dante himself did, to register the total character of the phantasm as the intellect sees it. The difference between the idiom of Dante, containing as it did the

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"natural inevitable images" and the idiom of Crane, lies in the different character of the memorial structure of the individual poets, not in some wilful misuse of the intuitional faculty.

It is neither possible nor desirable for the mature modern Catholic poet to return to the phantasm-character of medieval man. The evolution of human consciousness decrees that the increase of knowledge be assimilated into the imaginative structure, and made useful as a memory quotient in his problem of facing life. To do less than this falsifies the character of reality. Tate assumes that because the modern poet cannot achieve the character of Dante's images something is lost to the race.

Nothing is ever lost to the race. The modern poet possesses Dante, and it is this very possession of Dante that has caused the modification of his phantasm-character. When Crane writes of the bridge, he is not discounting the symbol of the bridge as the ancients saw it, but rather subsuming their symbolic reference into his own discernment, and extending that symbolic reference to a new imaginative dimension. Behind this symbolic usage lies the bridge as symbolized by all the poets who have shared the European consciousness, from Homer to Whitman, and not excluding the psalmist and evangelists. In Crane, the bridge-symbol is proceeding exactly as Tate says it ought, conducting an action "through analogy, of the human to the divine, of the natural to the supernatural, of the low to the high, of time to eternity." And it is doing it by the same psychic process that Dante's symbols did, only it assumes the imaginative existence within the context of experience which Dante established. Dante would have been unable to reach this complexity of experience even if he had tried to—the complexity was not available to him in his historical situation.

AS ANOTHER medieval instance of symbolic imagination Tate lists the famous letter of St. Catherine of Siena to Raymond of Capua, in which she sustained a young nobleman during his execution, and received his head in her hands and his blood upon her garments. In a greater work, her masterpiece, the *Dialogue*, St. Catherine employs the figure of the bridge to represent the function of Christ bridging the gulf between God and man. This symbol of the bridge, by which Plato's theory of the inter-participation of forms is once again employed in Christian thought, is unquestionably subsumed into the collective consciousness of European man and hence must have been operative in the transcendental attitude of Crane when he employed the bridge in a symbolic way.

His poem lacks totality of structure because his metaphysic was imperfect, but his imaginative attempt is valid, because the bridge as a symbol had been prepared through long centuries of Christianity to perform just such a function. The "disintegration" of the image to yield its potentiality of abstraction is right and inevitable, for its concreteness was assimilated long ago with Dante.

Rouault cannot see with the same eye as Giotto, but the reality he does see, the abstractness in the potential of the form, is no less necessary to man than the sublime concrete of the Florentine. No modern poet, after Baudelaire, can bring to the image of a woman the same quality of response that Dante brought to Beatrice. In fact, for the modern poet, the total fact of Woman is far greater than Dante could have experienced it. For in his imagination it is augmented by the insight of Baudelaire, and his complex of reference will inevitably include among many other things a Dante-Baudelaire equation, and by virtue of its complexity "open up," make available to the mind, the greater reality of the superior synthesis as the modern poet perceives that synthesis in the deeps of the creative intuition.

It is therefore most important to understand that the relative worth of a Dante and a Crane will not be determined by the degree of concreteness or abstractness each registers, but rather by *the authenticity of registration* of what each actually sees, whether the concrete or the abstract. Many a medieval poet must have seen as concretely as Dante, but he lacked the capacity to body forth that concreteness in the mystery of form. Thus of all modern abstractionists, very few possessed Crane's tremendous gift to make form real, and through his art bestow upon us a vision of reality absolutely essential to an understanding of what we are.

It is through our apprehension of the concrete that we intuit the nature of essences, of the essential; and through this apprehension we are able to govern ourselves, accommodate ourselves to the bewildering flux of phenomena, achieve stability and survive. But it is through our apprehension of the abstract that we intuit the nature of the existential, and through this apprehension transcend the tyranny of history, of time, partake of the divine largesse which we possess as spiritual beings.

Crane, through the deficiencies of his culture and the malformation of his youth, was woefully deficient in the stabilizing apprehension of the concrete, a deficiency which was to send him from homosexuality to suicide. But to his credit and our gain, he purchased a kind of heroic redemption, in that he was enabled to register most vividly reality as he did apprehend it, the tremendous authenticity of the abstract, and hence make of his death that sacrifice by which an age enables those whom it destroys to accomplish what we others need to know.

Seeing through the lens of his verse that which Hart Crane saw, let us never fail to remind ourselves that we are spared the awesome witness of dying as he did.

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A Gifted Native Son

The Identity of James Baldwin

JAMES FINN

JAMES BALDWIN'S most recent work, *Another Country* (Dial. $5.95.) seems to have disappointed many of his previously admiring critics and induced a general moaning at the literary bars. There is a gathering consensus that the book is composed principally of good intentions. Remarkably enough, there seems to be little effort to say exactly what the good intentions are, or to see *Another Country* in relation to Baldwin's previous work.

Considering that *Another Country* is his third novel and his fifth book, it might be instructive to evaluate the nature of his accomplishment to date and to see it in that context. There is little doubt that he is a fine and imaginative writer; there is every reason to include him in those incessant lists of "our best young novelists"; the real question, of course, which has yet to be answered, is whether he is to belong to that small group of writers who affect the imaginative life of our country.

It was evident from his first published books that Baldwin was a rare combination of intelligence, passion and talent and that he could bring them all to focus on significant aspects of contemporary life. In *Go Tell It on The Mountain* (1953) he had already at his command a prose that could sustain large demands. With no break in tone it could move from the heightened oratory and preaching of an evangelical, store-front Harlem church to relatively flat, clean narrative and the easy obscenities of colloquial speech. His characters took on undeniable substance and reality. These novelistic virtues earned the praises they deserved. Not to separate these virtues from the total achievement, what was most notable, what most served to set Baldwin apart, was in fact his presentation of American Negro life.

His disclosure of this particular Negro community within a white society, this community largely apart from the encompassing society, but almost always actively aware of it as a shaping, hovering, threatening presence, struck a scarcely-sounded note in our literature. To be sure, we have had novels by Negroes and about Negroes, and novels which have "investigated" the Negro problem, by which we mean, of course, the uneasy, unsettled relation which exists between black Americans and white Americans. Or, more accurately, we have agreed to call "novels" what are in fact essays, arguments, exhortation and what can only be termed the maunderings of passionate, untrained sociologists—to all of which the modern novel offers itself as a popular conveyance that will hold every kind of bag and baggage that can be tumbled, shoved and forced into it.

Amid the watery wastes of modern fiction, amid all that is meretricious and trivial and which scarcely aspires to a higher estate, there are the few works of permanent value and a larger group of honorable failures. In this latter group we find works by talented writers who set themselves a task similar to Baldwin's, but who bent beneath the vast and subtle forces our society brings to bear on such an effort.

Only when we have some awareness of these forces can we begin to assess Baldwin's accomplishment in *Go Tell It on The Mountain*. For he succumbed neither to the temptation to exploit nor to the pressures to give way. His novel seems to have come into existence within a vast area of freedom. The Negro community is observed and presented in all its particularity, not as a "minority group," or as a cause or as a segment of society, but as a group of persons whose lives have meaning and interest in themselves. There is never any doubt about their relation to the whites, but this relation does not overwhelm or obscure the sharp, clear focus of the novel. We are presented with an impression of life, not a cry of protest or the conclusion of a thesis.

BALDWIN'S next book, the collection of essays entitled *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), was confirmation that the author was a man of poise, determination and incisive intelligence. The deliberate and bitter ambiguity of the title was explored and developed in almost every essay. In spite of all that has been written about the Negro in America in the last decade or so, I think there is no more lucid, revealing and corruscating record than this book. The intensity of feeling is matched by the brilliance of the thought, and it is difficult to grasp the moral effort that must have been required to bring to the surface, to place under the harsh light of critical

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examination, things that both black and white have for so long kept buried deep.

Apart from his discussion of the Negro problem, which is the core and throbbing heart of the book, Baldwin made several provocative remarks about the function of the writer, specifically the novelist. Whether they ought to be or not, he wrote, "social affairs are not generally speaking the writer's prime concern." More positively, he wrote that the human being "is not, after all, merely a member of a Society or a Group or a deplorable conundrum to be explained by Science. He is . . . something more than that, something resolutely indefinable, unpredictable. In overlooking, denying, evading his complexity—which is nothing more than the disquieting complexity of ourselves—we are diminished and we perish; only within this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, danger, darkness, can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves. It is this power of revelation which is the business of the novelist, this journey toward a more vast reality which must take precedence over all other claims."

I quote at length these brave words—with which I am in almost total agreement—because they present a high conscious standard against which Baldwin's work can be measured. We can use exactly the terms he has offered us in approaching his subsequent novels.

For many who admired his novel of a fundamentalist sect in Harlem, *Giovanni's Room* (1956) must have come as something of a surprise. Dealing with a young American in Paris who discovers that his feelings for his fiancée must vie with the affection he develops for another young man, it was, apparently, as far removed from his first novel as it could readily be. It had, first, nothing to do with race relations; there is not even tangential reference to such matters. More important, however, was his choice of homosexuality as a theme—not, of course, because it was startling but because it was the very reverse.

Novels about homosexuality have been tumbling from the presses in recent years as steadily as cookbooks, and more than one reader must have felt that we had learned as much about homosexuality as the novel had to offer. But Baldwin took this battered theme and put it to his own uses. For David, Baldwin's version of the American innocent abroad, approaches some recognition of his own identity as a person by being forced to face questions about what it means to be an American and, more particularly, an American man. The tortuous path he treads as he advances on his discovery seems, for him, inevitable and his acceptance is convincing and compelling.

There are, however, faults in the novel that are surprisingly crude and naive. The bases for the relations which exist between David and Giovanni and between David and his fiancée are simply not adequate. For example, David's fiancée, after roaming around Spain trying to decide whether she should, indeed, marry him, finds that she wants, desires and needs him. But we are not shown and find it difficult to believe that her indecision blossoms so pleasantly into love.

To substantiate the threat he poses to David, Giovanni must be more than the physically attractive, morally weak character that is presented, but where the "something more" should be there is simply an invitation for the reader to provide it. Again, there probably are—heaven protect us—people who talk about what it means to be a man or a woman in exactly the terms David and his fiancée use, but these are dead passages in the novel and the characters are temporarily transformed into puppets for the ventriloquist author. To add but one more item to the list, the prose sometimes palpitates excessively as if it were only just under control. These faults would be not simply damaging but fatal to anything that was not as firm and shaped as *Giovanni's Room*.

THE BAKER'S DOZEN of essays in Baldwin's next book, *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), deal with various topics: the Negro in the South, a Conference of Negro-African Writers and Artists in Paris, Harlem, Faulkner, Gide, Bergman, Norman Mailer and Richard Wright. Almost every essay is concerned with some aspect of the life of the Negro in Western society and especially in America. But this book differs from his earlier collection of essays not only in tone but in an extension of thought.

Americans, and Europeans for that matter, have long been agitated over the "idea" of America. What is America? the American character? the American experience? What does it all mean and what does it add up to? In these essays Baldwin seems almost compulsively driven to ask these questions in one form or another. And they are all intimately related to the problem of establishing one's own personal identity, a problem made the more difficult because "Americans . . . evade so far as possible all genuine experience." The very title of the book establishes the theme, for that by which we name a thing is that by which we give it identity in our eyes.

Another Country, to bring us to his most recent work, is Baldwin's attempt to cope imaginatively with these questions and, insofar as he succeeds, to provide at least a partial answer. It is difficult to relate briefly the action of this novel without seeming to sell it down the river. Simply to indicate the major boundaries, however, the novel tells of a year in the lives of a group of people in New York who are unmoored.

Rufus Scott, a colored jazz musician and sometime prostitute, has as mistress a white Southern girl who seriously cracks up. His sister Ida becomes mistress of his closest friend, Vivaldo. Eric Jones, a white actor who had fled to France on being rejected by Rufus, re-

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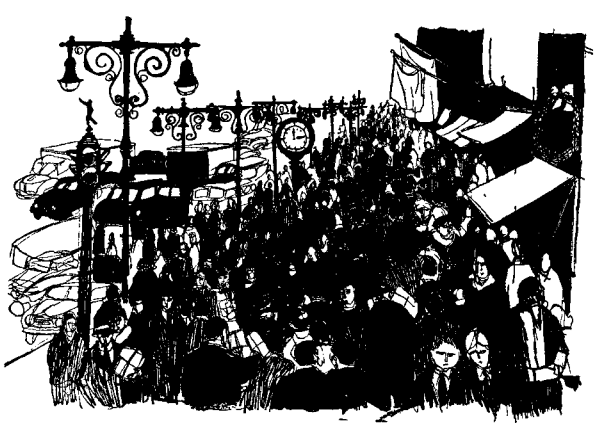
turns to New York to await his new lover Yves. While waiting he provides the first unbrutalized homosexual experience for Vivaldo. Eric also has an affair with Cass Silenski, wife of Richard Silenski, moderately successful novelist who has sold out. National lines, class lines, sexual lines and color lines are crossed and re-crossed.

The novel, it must be admitted, is not completely successful on its own grounds and this brief description, grossly unfair as it is, suggests part of the reason. From the early pages there hovers about it an inevitable air of contrivance. What should be an act of the imagination emerges too frequently as an effort of the will. There is a description in the novel which applies, unfortunately, to much of *Another Country*. Vivaldo is trying to complete a novel but he finds that the "people in his novel did not seem to trust him. They were all named, more or less, all more or less destined, the pattern he wished them to describe was clear to him. But it did not seem clear to them . . . he begged them to surrender up to him their privacy. And they refused. . . . They were waiting for him to find the key, press the nerve, tell the truth."

Too often Baldwin has, in *Another Country*, failed to find the key, to press the right nerve. In most novels of any length, even the best novels, there are some passages that the author finds difficult to navigate. He knows what is called for, he knows what has to be done so that his characters will advance to some further necessary position, but the inspiration, the imagination that has so far supported and guided him flags and falters. At this point he is thrown back upon his craft and cunning. He must contrive the passages so that they do not appear to be contrived, so that they appear to the reader equal to any demands that might be placed upon them. If he is successful, few readers find him out and he alone knows where all these soft spots exist in the work. But no work can have many such passages and live.

There are large areas of *Another Country* that have escaped Baldwin's imaginative control. As a result, characters sometimes seem dead or simply unreal, their acts unbelievable and their conversation wooden. Even Baldwin's prose, ordinarily so precise, taut and sure, softens and falls into excesses worthy of our most sensation-mongering writers.



To be more specific in some of these charges, Richard Silenski is simply a pawn throughout most of the novel, a low point by which we can measure the aspirations and achievements of the others. A great confrontation between him and his wife Cass is moving, but there is an unbridgeable gap between what this scene should be and what it is. The conversations which take place between Cass and Ida, in which Cass is being instructed in the realities of the world, are utterly flat, and other earnest conversations between Cass and Eric, and Vivaldo and Eric have the ring of a textbook with imaginary case histories. Baldwin's prose is probably at its poorest in some of his detailed and explicit descriptions of sexual activity, a failure which he shares with many noted writers.

THIS MIGHT seem to leave little to say in favor of the novel. But *Another Country* is a novel whose parts are more successful than the whole, and the achievement in these parts is of such a high order and of such particularity that we will not, I think, find their counterpart in American writing.

The first section of the novel, which is devoted primarily to Rufus, could stand as a complete short work. Rufus, much of whose value we are asked to take on trust, is gradually worn down and destroyed by forces that he cannot totally comprehend, nor can the reader—though he may recognize them as familiar—for they flow from no single identifiable source. But Rufus exists as a person, the forces that destroy him are palpable, and the grotesque and terrible prayer that is wrenched from him when he plunges to his death reverberates.

There are other passages where Baldwin is equal to his intentions—in the bitter and the comic exchanges between Ida and Vivaldo, to cite but one other example, where the cruel intermingling of the tensions of sex and color is made harshly clear—and the result is brilliant. And those are enough, not entirely to save the book but to make it more interesting and more rewarding than the "great" new works held up for universal admiration with such implacable regularity.

If the cause of Baldwin's development is, in fact, as I have outlined it, it might seem to be cause for disappointment rather than not, for as he has gotten more ambitious in his novels his faults have become more manifest. But there are several reasons to regard him still as one of our very few valuable writers.

Henry James, in one of his essays, says that in the English novel, "(by which of course I mean the American as well), more than in any other, there is a traditional difference between that which people know and that which they agree to admit that they know, that which they see and that which they speak of, that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow

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to enter into literature. . . . The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field."

The great reason to trust the future of James Baldwin is that in addition to his evident talent he has immense moral energy. It is, in fact, what has led him into difficulties in his novels, for he is one of the few contemporary novelists who has not accepted current morality either to exploit it or undercut it. He has set himself the more difficult task of analyzing the ethic which actually operates. He is concerned with that current of the spirit which flows beneath all our actions and which occasionally wells up to reveal us as the unpredictable, irreducible creatures of freedom that we are.

One of Baldwin's critics has said that he writes as if the Enlightenment had not occurred. Few comments could be more wide of the mark. Baldwin writes, rather, with the clear recognition that the Enlightenment is not enough. A constant awareness of this fact permeates his work and grounds it in undeniable moral seriousness. For what seems to be true of Baldwin is that he is, in the most honorable sense of the word, a moralist and that he writes within a tradition more familiar to European than Anglo-American literature.

The failure to recognize this was at least partially why some reviewers, under the guise of criticizing *Another Country,* asked Baldwin to write another kind of novel, to tell us how the characters made a living, what they did in their spare time, etc. . . . But the epigraph to *Another Country* is, I take it, intended seriously by Baldwin and is not simply a way to fend off those who would put down his characters because they are lost, directionless and of no real value in our society.

All of the characters in *Another Country* are in serious trouble. Rejecting the values which society proclaims without belief or commitment, they are unable to construct or discover others which are strong enough both to allow commitment and to withstand the corruption which flows here and there with such little hindrance. While their trouble is personal and leads to different personal solutions, the society which produces such people is itself in serious trouble.

Baldwin, it is clear, deals with familiar themes and ideas, with the American experience, with the relation between the person and society, race and sex, with the great question of identity—"Who am I?" His moralistic devices and techniques are also familiar. His originality and his value, which I hold to be great, derive from his great and penetrating insights. For he does see these questions from a special angle and does reveal what has long been obscured or completely hidden.

While any evaluation of Baldwin as a writer must consider both his essays and his novels, it is, hopefully, for the latter that he will be remembered. Since the essays, for the most part, deal with contemporary problems, they will become historical; that is, again hopefully, they will cease to apply to current situations. Yet it is partly on the basis of the essays that one has faith in his value as a novelist, for some of the resources on which he must draw are revealed most sharply in the essays. What seems to be the case is that Baldwin has yet to find the artistic form that will reveal the mystery, that will uncover the truth he knows is there. If he does, if his intention and accomplishment become one, if his intellectual grasp is matched by his imaginative, he will be a writer whose measure it will be difficult to take.

A Madman in a Public Garden

Gentle enough he seems and almost glad
As, stalking the flowers under the tight sky,
He wanders easily, no sense on guard.
And not his voice but all his movements cry
"He is not like us." Now he stoops, unbends,
Only to wave and rub his spreading hands.

Probably he listens to his own daft talk.
He taps his foot to tell himself he's there.
Then, suddenly gleeful, begins to shake
As if his mirth might split that inner air
And set him down in some less lonely place;
And set him chattering to another face.

I hear him speak: he talks of flowers and war,
As if some killing buried in his brain
Had choked his blossoming long years before.
"I'm dead," he says. "The rose; the death of men."
Neither of us is old enough to tell
What blood and poppies joined in Passchendaele.

Thought flees him. And, speechless, I cannot say
What, in his senses, he would've wanted said:
That in the wisest and most lucid day
There would be some who'd number us as dead
Whatever speech we had or sense we made;
Both sane and mad in the same torment flayed.

All things are riddle-ridden; yet, for him,
No help within this garden is required.
He leans toward the flowers and touches them.
One rose he kisses; and, all else ignored,
Shouts so that startled people turn and gaze:
"I found my heart and gave it to the rose!"

Leaving, he skips and laughs, still more alive.
More zest he shows than I can match or make,
Watching and thinking.—Is there grace to save
Me and all others from a like mind-break?
Or is he doubly blessed, with sacred friends,
Who held the rose within his mindless hands?

ANTHONY BAILEY

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A Genius for Gossip

The Brothers Goncourt

MARTIN TURNELL

THE CAREER of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt is one of the most famous of all literary partnerships. In the space of twenty years they wrote well over thirty volumes of history, art criticism, novels and plays, but their most enduring monument is undoubtedly their memoirs of French literary life in the nineteenth century, from which Dr. Robert Baldick has made a new selection (*Pages from the Goncourt Journal*, Oxford University Press. $8.75).

They were the sons of Pierre Marc de Goncourt by his second marriage. Edmond, the eldest of four children, was born on 26th May, 1822 and Jules on 17th December, 1830. Pierre Marc was a professional soldier and his first wife was the daughter of a general under whom he was serving. His second marriage in 1821 caused a breach between the families and seems to have hastened the end of his military career. He had been unemployed since 1819, was placed on half-pay in 1825 and on the retired list in 1833. Although his second wife brought him a substantial dowry, the years of inactivity irked him and he died the year following his retirement.

The father had no feeling for the arts and it has been suggested that the brothers inherited their talents from their mother. This may have been so, but she came of a family of civil servants and had decided views on art as a career. When Edmond announced that he intended to be a painter, he met with every sort of opposition from his mother. He became a solicitor's clerk and then spent two years, which he later described as the two most horrible years of his life, in the Treasury "adding up figures from morning to night."

Mme. de Goncourt died in 1848, leaving her sons a joint income of ten thousand francs. It was not wealth, but it was sufficient to enable them to live in reasonable comfort without having to work for a living. They celebrated their financial independence by spending two years on what would now be regarded as a prolonged "sketching holiday," touring France, North Africa and Switzerland. Although they were accomplished draftsmen and though painting was to remain perhaps their greatest interest—it played an important part in the formation of what became known as "the artistic style," or *écriture artiste*—they abandoned the idea of becoming practicing artists and in 1850 began to write.

The brothers turned out several one-act plays which were refused by the theater managers and contributed art criticism to the advanced reviews. After the failure of a first novel called *En 18 . . .*, in 1851 they devoted ten years to their studies of French art and society in the eighteenth century. In 1860 they returned to imaginative work. *Charles Demailly*, their second novel, is a semi-autobiographical account of the literary life of their time. It was followed by *Soeur Philomène* and *Renée Mauperin* in 1864, *Germinie Laceteux* in 1865, *Manitte Salomon* in 1867 and *Madame Gervaisais* in 1869.

THEY BEGAN their Journal on 2nd December, 1851. Although Jules acted as the scribe until his death nineteen years later, it was the result of the same close collaboration as the other books written during their joint lives. The brothers were constantly dwelling on the closeness of the connection and the singularity of the partnership.

"Never," they wrote in 1859, "has there been such a case of one soul placed in two bodies." The following year they recorded the shock to "our" nervous system of a visit to a hospital in search of first-hand material for *Soeur Philomène*. "When we are parted," they wrote in another place, "we each feel the lack of the other half of ourselves . . . we are incomplete like a book in two volumes of which the first has been lost."

A friend is quoted as saying that since they were bound to fall in love with the same woman, "law and custom ought to make an exception in favor of our phenomenal duality" by permitting them *both* to marry her. They were far too self-centered to fall in love with anybody, but for a period they actually shared the same mistress. We know, too, from contemporary observers that if, during a conversation, one of the brothers stopped for breath in the middle of a sentence, the other would finish it for him and continue the argument on precisely the same lines.

Jules died on 22nd June, 1870. Edmond, who became known ironically as "the widow of letters," fabricated

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the legend that his younger brother was a martyr to literature who had died prematurely from the immense strain of composition. The truth is that he succumbed to syphilis of the brain—the great scourge of French nineteenth-century writers—which he had caught from a prostitute when he was nineteen.

Edmond promptly decided to abandon both the Journal and literature, but in spite of his undoubted devotion to his brother the itch to write proved too strong. A harrowing account of Jules' last days, undertaken ostensibly as an act of piety, turned into a continuation of the Journal which went on until twelve days before Edmond's own death in 1896.

"What we have tried to do," said Edmond in his preface, "is to bring our contemporaries to life for posterity in a speaking likeness, by means of the vivid stenography of a conversation, the physiological spontaneity of a gesture. . . ." Their sole criterion was truth to life. They assumed from the first that owing to the offense that it would undoubtedly cause, the Journal would have to be published posthumously.

They did their best to keep its existence a secret, but in 1883 Edmond could not resist the temptation of reading some extracts to the Daudets. He seized on their interest as a pretext for publishing selections. There were parts, he decided, which could well be published during his lifetime and parts which must wait until he had been dead twenty years. The first volume appeared in 1887; the ninth and last a few weeks before his death. It was not until after the second world war that the Académie Goncourt felt that the full text could safely be published. In spite of the lapse of time there were legal difficulties, but publication eventually began in 1956 and was completed three years later in twenty-two volumes.

THE RECEPTION of the volumes published while Edmond de Goncourt was alive showed that there were considerable divergences between what he and his victims regarded as permissible. The protests were immediate and vigorous. They were renewed almost every time a fresh volume appeared.

Taine asked that there should be no further publication of what he said in private conversations. Renan complained about the publicity given to his pro-German views, and there was a brush with the Daudets which nearly brought the enterprise to a halt. It is said that whenever Edmond entered a drawing-room people instinctively moved out of earshot. It is impossible to read his selections, still less the parts that even he refrained from making public, without feeling that there was ample cause for alarm.

Dr. Baldick describes the Journal as "one of the greatest diaries in the world." This is a serious error of judgment. The brothers did not possess either the intelligence, the moral qualities or the insight which go to the making of a great work. They were not writers of the same caliber or, indeed, in the same sense as Flaubert and Zola whom they so grievously maligned at one time or another. They were talented men of letters who were fanatically determined to win immortality at any price. The Journal is filled with lamentations over their lack of recognition, the severity of reviewers or the absence of congratulatory letters when a new novel comes out. In his later years Edmond actually refused to marry a girl who was much too good for him because he wished his fortune to be used to found a literary academy and the prize which was to confer an undeserved cachet on so many bad or indifferent novels.

One may feel that in the long run the Goncourts had little cause for complaint. They had a gift for choosing the subject or the literary form which allowed them to make the best use of their talents. The result is that their work has enjoyed a fame and has exercised an influence which were out of all proportion to its intrinsic merits. Their art criticism is not comparable to the best of Baudelaire or Fromentin, but their appreciations of minor masters like Watteau, Fragonard and Boucher led to a revival of interest in eighteenth-century painting. Their inborn taste for tittle-tattle and a flair for putting their hand on the right document made it possible for them to present social history from a new angle—one well-known to us today—the angle of the gossip columnist.

Neither were they genuine novelists. Their works of fiction are examples of the man-of-letters novel. Yet in a curious way a morbid preoccupation with mental and physical disease, their interest in case histories, a liking for the seamy side of working-class life and their theories of naturalism had a decisive influence on Zola and most of the late nineteenth-century French novelists. The *écriture artiste*, which was a form of literary Impressionism, also influenced Zola and Huysmans; but in the hands of its inventors it was never more than a gimmick, an interesting specimen for dissection in the philologist's laboratory.

Much has been written of the importance of the Journal as a source book for nineteenth-century literary history. It is rather a repository of discreditable anecdotes and spiteful judgments which one reads with a sort of horrified fascination. It offers a full-length portrait of two excessively unpleasant and highly neurotic characters who are obsessed with the macabre, with the grisly detail, and who cannot abide the successes of those who are supposed to be their friends. It also gives an extremely one-sided picture of literary society with its hair down.

A third of the material in Dr. Baldick's selection has not previously appeared in English. The new pages are more shocking, more dripping in venom, than the old. "Murger," we read, "is dying of an illness in which one

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rots alive . . . . When they tried to trim his moustache the other day, the lip came away with the hairs." Mirbeau arrives one night at his mistress' home, finds that she is sleeping out, goes to her dressing-room and "tears into shreds, with his murderous hands, his mistress' little dog, the only creature on earth that she really loved."

THE EXAMPLES, of literary conversion are not impressive. The views of the brothers on religion, like those of other contemporary writers, are embarrassing in their ignorance and their shallowness. We hear Renan "comparing God, his particular God, with all possible piety and seriousness, to an oyster." Their main interest, however, lay elsewhere. They were not, on their own admission, great lovers. "One week of love," they said, "disgusts us for three months." But they were unquenchable on its rawest details and its perversions. "Dinner at Magny's. . . . We went on to woman, the usual subject of conversation. . . . From copulation we went on to spleen." They record an extraordinary outburst by their friend, Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, on the Empress Eugénie who is called "a trollop without any temperament."

It is, however, their judgments on their contemporaries which leave the worst taste. We see Gautier "heavy of face, with all his features sagging, his lines thickening, a sleepy countenance, a mind drowned in a barrel of matter." "The older Flaubert gets, the more provincial he becomes. The truth is that if you subtract from my good friend the ox in him, the hard-working animal, the manufacturer of books at the rate of a word an hour, you find yourself faced with a creature of very ordinary talent, of very little originality."

Renan is "the toadying, servile adulator of any sort of success." There is Taine, "a philosopher whom one runs into at all the great courtesans' houses." He has "the stupid walk of a pot-bellied clergyman, with his sly, hypocritical gaze hidden behind his spectacles, and the swarthy, unhealthy ugliness of the horrifying wife, who looks like a diseased silkworm."

Sainte-Beuve was a favorite target. "Sainte-Beuve saw the first Emperor once: it was at Boulogne and he was urinating. It is, so to speak, in that posture that he has seen and judged all great men ever since." He is a critic "who has never delivered an independent, personal judgment on a single book." Zola, hailed in 1868 as "our admirer and pupil," committed the unforgivable sin of outshining them. "It is strange," says Edmond in 1875, "what a whiner that fat, pot-bellied young fellow is." Nor does poor Mme. Zola escape. In 1894 she was "treated in Rome with the politeness accorded to society women, something to which she is not accustomed."

The Goncourts set their sights high. Their aim was not merely to equal Saint-Simon: it was to surpass him. But they possessed neither the genius nor the fire power of the great duke. They had an eye for the graphic detail, as we can see from the glimpse of Gautier quoted above, but they never managed to penetrate beneath the surface. That is why their portraits, or what Edmond called "speaking likenesses," transform the models into figures from a strip cartoon. For what we have here is not the memoirs of a latter-day Saint-Simon, but a kind of multi-volume nineteenth-century horror comic.

The Panther

Im Jardin des Plantes, Paris

BY RAINER MARIA RILKE: TRANSLATED BY RICHARD MACKSEY

Sein Blick ist vom Vorübergehn der Stäbe
so müd geworden dass er nichts mehr hält.
Ihm ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe
und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt.

His sight worn by the passing of the bars
has grown so weary it has lost its hold.
It seems to him there are a thousand bars,
And behind this thousand no world to behold.

Der weiche Gang geschmeidig starker Schritte,
der sich im allerkleinsten Kreise dreht,
ist wie ein Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte,
in der betäubt ein grosser Wille steht.

The easy gait of his supple, forceful paces
which pads about a circle almost nil
is like a dance of power that embraces
a center where, dazed, stands a mighty will.

Nur manchmal schiebt der Vorhang der Pupille
sich lautlos auf—. Dann geht ein Bild hinein,
geht durch der Glieder angespannte Stille—
und hört im Herzen auf zu sein.

Rarely the curtain, filming vacant pupil,
Soundlessly opens—an image enters him,
Goes through the silent tension of his limbs
And in his heart it ceases and is still.

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A Growing Sense of the Dignity of Man

Guilt and the Postwar German Novel

BRUCE A. COOK

SINCE THE END of the war, West Germany has been constantly in the political spotlight. From the creation of the Federal Republic, through the breath-taking *Wirtschaftswunder*, until today with the present protracted crisis in Berlin, the eyes of the world have been focused on Germany. But for all its political prominence, most people qualified to have an opinion agree that the country has endured something like a literary blackout during the past seventeen years, and this has disappointed and surprised a great many people.

It was generally expected that Germany's new freedom would give rise to a glorious cultural renaissance. But nothing of the sort has been forthcoming. This failure has embarrassed many Germans, so embarrassed them that they have been moved to offer excuses. The one heard most often and, I suppose, most generally accepted, is that all the Thomas Manns and Hermann Hesses of the present generation were killed off in the war. This is a convenient explanation and may, to some extent, be true, but it allows us to ignore two deeper and better reasons for Germany's retarded literary recovery.

First of all, the younger generation of writers in West Germany has been cut off almost completely from its literary predecessors. Of the established writers of the post-World War I generation, only two, Gottfried Benn and Ernst Juenger, chose to remain in Germany after Hitler assumed complete control in 1933. Neither was the sort of writer likely to inspire a postwar revival.

Benn was, in the beginning, quite enthusiastic for the Nazis. In his essay of 1933, "Answer to the Literary Emigrants," Benn set forth his declaration of allegiance to the new regime: "I shall go on revering what I have found exemplary and educational for German letters . . . but I personally declare for the new state, because it is my people whose trail is being blazed here. Who am I to exclude myself? Do I know better? No. I can try to guide it, as far as lies in my power, in the direction I should like to see followed; but if I failed, it would still be my people. People means much!"

Benn found, in less than two years, that he could do very, very little to guide the state in the direction he should like to see followed. His position in the Prussian Academy of Arts was challenged first by one colleague who questioned the purity of Benn's Aryan blood, and then by another who objected to the expressionist poet's "degenerate art." Benn, a physician, soon found his practice limited by the state; and in 1938, a complete ban was put on all his writings. He sought exile in the only refuge left open to a man of such mixed sentiments (People vs. State) and enlisted in the army. He survived the war to comment on his words of allegiance: "Today I would not write them any more; they are romantic and have an unpleasant ardor."

Like Benn, Ernst Juenger sought refuge in the army. But for him, the choice was almost inevitable. During World War I, he was wounded seven times in four years in the trenches of France and was given Germany's highest military award. He returned a hero to post-armistice Germany and became its most eminent war writer with his autobiographical *Storm of Steel,* published in 1920—he was something like Audie Murphy and Norman Mailer rolled into one. Although he gave intellectual aid and comfort to the Nazi movement with his *Blut und Eisen* rhapsodies, he managed to hold himself personally aloof from the Party.

In his recent novel, *The Glass Bees,* Juenger has offered this apologia for his cooperation with the Hitler government: "I didn't think much about politics. I had a feeling that like Lorenz we were all jumping out of windows, and sooner or later we were bound to crash. At the moment we were, so to speak, suspended in mid-air. I mentioned before that a number of my friends had advanced into high military and political positions. I stayed modestly in their wake. It was, after all, necessary to join something." And of course what Juenger joined was the army.

While in the service, Juenger published a veiled, allegorical attack on the Nazi regime, *On the Marble Cliffs.* During the war, he saw no combat, but was kept in honorable isolation in administrative and staff positions mostly in Paris. After the July 20, 1944 bomb plot, he was retired from the army as politically unreliable.

Juenger and Benn remained, but scores of writers, poets and journalists were either forced to leave in 1933

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or left soon afterward in disgust at the New Order. Many, like Alfred Doblin, and the Austrians, Robert Musil, Franz Werfel, and Hermann Broch, died in exile. Those who survived World War II chose not to return to West Germany. Some, like Thomas Mann and Erich Maria Remarque, remained outside at a comfortable distance in Switzerland.

Many, however, did return, but to *East* Germany. Not only Bertolt Brecht, but Anna Seghers, Arnold Zweig, and Heinrich Mann, among others, took up residence in the Soviet Zone. The literary situation there was quite different than in the Federal Republic. With such illustrious names as these present, there was no question of literary succession. These, indeed, were the proper ancestors to inspire a literary renaissance, but, of course, the East German government created a political climate which made such a development impossible. The great reason for the literary blackout in the East is the totalitarian character of the regime there.

BUT IN the Federal Republic where writers have been given a greater measure of freedom than ever before, there is a second reason for the slump. It is, like the first, related to recent German history; the reason, in fact, *is* recent German history.

For a writer who has lived through the calculated inhumanity of the Hitler years, endured the war and the final collapse, then has seen his nation rise again to an unprecedented peak of economic prosperity—such a writer would find his powers of description and interpretation rendered all but impotent. Some older writers have felt themselves so intimidated by contemporary events that they have chosen to ignore them, retreating to the safe territory of the historical novel or the philosophical parable (a favorite and familiar form to German writers). Younger writers and critics have nothing but contempt for this literary question-begging. One of them, novelist Rudolf Kramer-Badoni, puts it rather testily:

"If I pick up a novel which deals with the present time but makes a detour round contemporary ideas, cares and horrors, obviously because the author has in mind his possible readers of 1999, then I put the book respectfully aside. Unfortunately it was not written for me, for by 1999 I shall have been dead for a long time."

Most writers in West Germany, like Kramer-Badoni, far from turning their backs on contemporary history, have seized upon it and used it as the raw material (sometimes barely refined) for the form which has become most expressive of life in modern Germany: the *Zeitroman*, or novel of contemporary events. These younger writers have grappled mightily with their wartime experiences. A few of them have managed to rip from them the makings of good books.

Felix Hartlaub, a young German writer who served as war historian in Hitler's headquarters during the last months of the war, kept a number of diaries in which he recorded notes from every war front on which he fought. These were published posthumously (he died in the Battle of Berlin in 1945) under the title *Im Sperrkreis* (in the Secret Circle), and in spite of the book's unfinished form, it gained immediate recognition for the honesty and power of the author's insights.

War novels crowded the windows of German booksellers for years after the war. Mailer's *Naked and the Dead* and James Jones's *From Here to Eternity* had an enormous success in Germany. These two books greatly influenced the shape and tone of German war novels, if not some of their content as well. The battered faces of Red Valsen, Prewitt & Co. are mirrored in the hard-bitten anti-heroes of Willi Heinrich (*Cross of Iron* and *Crack of Doom*), Gerd Ledig (*The Stalin Organ*) and Rudolf Lorenzen (*Anything But a Hero*).

Jaroslav Hasek's classic bumbler, *Schweik*, served as the model for Hans Helmut Kirst's Gunner Asch in his enormously popular trilogy, *08/15*. Kirst's Gunner Asch books are rather strange ones. The satire and humor are there on the surface, but most of it seems directed at the "wrong" targets. Beneath it all, Kirst seems to be attacking all the forces, internal and external, which brought Germany to defeat in the war. Not so surprising, really, for the author was a *Waffen SS* lieutenant who fought on fanatically days after his nation's surrender. Such conduct would have appalled the good soldier Schweik.

ALTHOUGH it may have seemed to German readers that their writers intended to go on writing and rewriting the war forever, eventually both writers and their readers had to face the problem of peace. And an enormous problem it is for them! For today all Germans are challenged to look back to the post-World War I period to compare that prelude to disaster to our own troubled times. Yet to look back is to be confronted with the inevitable question: What went wrong with Germany between the wars? And with this, all sorts of corollary inquiries into the problem of collective and individual guilt suggest themselves. The writer who answers these questions honestly for himself must apply whatever knowledge he gains to the understanding of today's German society. For him, the question becomes: What is wrong with German society today?

The first German writer who attempted any sort of answer to these great questions was Wolfgang Borchert. He had had some time to meditate them. As a twenty-year-old soldier, he was condemned to death for telling in a letter what he thought of Hitler and the war. He waited eight months in a military prison for the sentence to be carried out before it was finally commuted to service on the Russian front. Later, because of another political indiscretion, he landed in prison again, and there he remained, escaping the death that may

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have awaited him in the final collapse of the German Army.

Borchert returned from prison and from the war one of "those men who come home, yet do not come home because for them there is no home left. Their home is outside, nights in the rain, on the streets. That is their Germany." And this was Borchert's Germany. He faced up to it and presented it to his people in what is perhaps the finest piece of writing yet produced by his generation: a radio play, "Outside the Door." He managed to write only this and a few short stories before he died of pneumonia late in 1947.

But others besides Wolfgang Borchert have asked these questions. Others have given their answers. Alfred Andersch, almost fifty, is one of the oldest of the younger writers, and old enough to have joined in the political turmoil of the last days of Weimar. He deserted from the German army during the war as an act of protest, and survived to become a writer of strong political vision and persuasion—one of the few in a generation largely indifferent to politics. He is recognizable in his own novels, *The Redhead* and *Flight to Afar,* as the old Marxist bear, wise from bitter experience, growling out his wisdom in fine German style.

Gunter Grass is no bear, but something of a Til Eulenspiegel, playing pranks on critics and readers alike. In his novel, *The Tin Drum,* he tells the tale of a boy who refuses to grow up, but drums his way blithely through the Hitler era in a series of misadventures played out at the expense of all authority. The novel is anarchistic in tone and intent; it has delighted many, but shocked more.

Martin Walser's intentions are more conservative. He has painted realistic though unflattering portraits of West German society in his two novels, *Marriage in Philipsburg* and *Halbzeit* (Half-Time). He shows it as an expression of a terse little epigram uttered by an industrialist in his first novel: "Everyone against everyone else . . . that is freedom."

EVERYONE against everyone else—and Willi Heinrich seems to be against them all. Though his war novels are his best (*Crack of Doom* is a fine book by any standard), it is Heinrich's three novels of the postwar period which have brought down the wrath of German readers upon him. His *métier* is violence; indeed, it seems to be all he knows. When he attempts to inject the violence and tension of war into peacetime settings, the results are sometimes forced and uncertain, as in *Mark of Shame,* or simply in bad taste, as in *Rape of Honor.*

A reviewer in The Commonweal once called Willi Heinrich a German James Jones. Although I'm sure it was meant pejoratively, this is a rather apt characterization of his attitude of total rebellion against his nation and its people. The really remarkable thing, though, is that there should *be* a German James Jones. In the past, German literary rebellions have been conducted according to the rather strict ground rules of *deutsche Kultur* and made to fit neatly into niches in German literary tradition. But Willi Heinrich is not playing by the rules; he is fighting under an alien and destructive inspiration. In his latest novel, *The Lonely Conqueror,* he even takes an American soldier as his leading character.

Heinrich Böll is quite a different writer. Not that he doesn't share a bit of Willi Heinrich's rancor, and not that there isn't also in his work a rebel strain. But all this is muted, subdued and subordinated to his attention to the individual human being. Working in the most concrete and personal terms. Böll has explored the misery caused by the dissolution of the family in postwar Germany in such fine books as *Acquainted with the Night, The Unguarded House,* and his latest, *Billiard am Halbzehn* (Billiards at Nine-Thirty).

Although most of Böll's work—and his best work, at that—deals with the problems of peace, his point of reference is always the Hitler era. As he wrote once in an essay on postwar Germany, "You did not really get to know the Germans in 1933, but later, in the 1940 delirium of victory, when marshals' batons rained down like manna from heaven." He continues: "When I meet people I used to know, I try to recall what they said and thought in 1940, in the year of victory and glory. . . ."

A Cologne Catholic, Heinrich Böll shows the marked influence of another alien, Graham Greene, in his attention to detail and form, and in his sharp, clear narrative style. (The crisp narrative is something relatively new to German writing; American readers have only to reach back to Thomas Mann for the feel of characteristic high style in the German novel.) But there is yet another important quality in Böll's writing which reflects and magnifies Greene—Graham Greene at his best—and I can describe it only by noting its characteristics: a deep sympathy for the human condition and a respect for man's frailty and strength.

If any writer in Germany today were to generate the energy for a literary renaissance it *should* be Heinrich Böll, but he is not likely to provide it. For such collective movements are never given impetus by subtlety and gentleness—but rather by something like a good swift kick. What writers like Böll *can* create, however, is a new climate of honesty and human dignity in German literature. And this Germany needs more than anything—more than a renaissance.

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THE STAGE

When Words Fail

NOTHING is more revealing of a lack of sophisticated knowledge of the nature of drama than the habit of regarding a play's language or insights as separable from its form. We hear a great deal about gifted young writers, blessed with sympathy and élan, who have not yet learned to construct properly, whose works lack "tension," who aren't "dramatic" or, on the ticket-broker level, "theatrical" enough. On the other hand, we know of playwrights like O'Neill whose language frequently dismays us but whose "vision" or "sense of theater" is supposed to carry us over the difficulty.

Now the idea that a play's language can somehow be admirable while the work as a whole is not, and the corollary which argues the reverse, are as destructive of understanding in drama as their counterparts are of understanding in the other arts. To say, for example, that a painting succeeds in color while its shapes fail, or that a poem possesses great verbal felicity within an unpleasant structure, is to say, really, that you have not confronted the object in its own being; you have performed an act of dissection and reduction, a kind of murder, such as we commit on a human face among whose features we pick and choose.

Plays which succeed verbally, or in the totality of their gestures—their tacit language—succeed; I know of no dramatic work whose language or movement excites me but which I condemn for a failure of "construction." This is of course not to say that there may not be imbalances or incomplete fusions in such works, but only that if a play possesses an adequate language it must by that fact possess an adequate structure, since speech in drama is nothing other than speech structured along dramatic lines. And this means that to speak of a play's "writing" as being remarkable while damning its dramatic procedures is simply to cling to a notion of stage art that is responsible for almost everything dispiriting in our theater: the notion of the well-made play, the belief in, or superstition of, tension, development, the caginess of suspense, the ambush of factual surprise, secrets revealed and climaxes attained.

The twin bill now at the Cherry Lane exemplifies perfectly the ineptitude of a criticism that keeps language and dramatic techniques in isolation from one another. William Hanley has been joyfully greeted for his "fine writing," his verbal and human gifts, at the same time as he has been scolded for not yet being a "real" playwright because he is not theatrical, his plays don't *happen* well. The truth is that he is indeed not a true playwright, but this is precisely due to his writing, which is flat, obvious, banal and jejune. There is nothing wrong with Mr. Hanley's situations or physical procedures, limited as they are; there is simply nothing dramatic in his words.

The evening's first one-acter, "Whisper into My Good Ear," concerns two old men who have arranged a suicide pact in order to end their bleak hollow lives. There are no events, except the negative one of the suicides' not taking place. But Mr. Hanley has put his two characters through a long conversation in which they comment on existence, expose their secrets and grope for one another's reality. One man is straightforward, tough, practical and, as it turns out, not eager to die; the other is oblique, gentle, philosophical and entirely bent on death. His greater horror of life stems, we are made to know—it is the play's point, I suppose—from his having nobody in the world, while his companion at least has an insane wife who sometimes recognizes him on his visits.

What they say to each other is, then, what the play is "about." And they say almost nothing that is not predictable, sentimental, unrevelatory and deficient in wit, subtlety or beauty. Everything is explicit (a fake air of mystery being contrived by the withholding of certain facts and the erratic behavior of the more suicidal man), every interchange results in the reduction of dramatic edge and pressure. When one man says "The trouble with you is I never know when you're kidding and when you're serious," we have one kind of verbal failure—the substitution of statement for implication. When he says "You're nutty as a fruitcake," we have simple cliché. And when, while talking about "secrets," the reflective man says "Once I found a bluebird's egg," to which the other sneers "That's a secret?" we have an abysmal inability to let even one's own rare breakthroughs into authentic vision carry themselves in peace.

The second play, "Mrs. Dally Has a Lover," exhibits the same relentless progress along a shelf of banal expression, the unseized opportunities stretching away like mountains on every side. Its subject, the affair between an unhappily married woman of thirty-eight and a boy half her age, is nothing—or everything—in itself. But the limpness and crudity of what passes between them, the woman's suffering under her superior sensitivity and humaneness (she reads Donne's love poems and urges the boy to go see a Cellini cup in the museum) and her final exhortation, as she senses the inevitable desertion, to listen to "the sweet music [of human communication] and pass it on"—is exemplary proof that situation is indeed nothing and that ripeness is all.

The acting at the Cherry Lane has also been praised, but apart from Estelle Parsons, who plays Mrs. Dally, I found it on a level with the work. Roberts Blossom, as the harder character of "Whisper," does at least maintain an honest line, while his partner Boris Tumarin is engaging in all sorts of fey movements, portentous spacings of his delivery and quasi-mystical breathings and twitches. But Miss Parsons, an actress

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of abundant vitality and great charm, almost lends her play an interest, which Blossom doesn't lend to his. How unfortunate that her co-worker, Robert Drivas, an echo of Paul Newman and Brando, does his best to deprive her of every chance to come or stay alive. I should like to see her in a worthier play. Or rather I should like to see her in a play, not an exercise in unexamined "compassion" or a recorded session of eavesdropping on the neighbors. RICHARD GILMAN

THE SCREEN

"He That Outlives This Day"

PRODUCER Darryl F. Zanuck and his confreres at 20th Century-Fox were pretty smart to use that quote from Shakespeare's "Henry V" in the advertisements for their epic film about the Normandy invasion. At times, especially in the tremendous scope of the battle scenes and in the conferences of the big brass on both sides, "The Longest Day" *is* reminiscent of the movie version of "Henry V." Furthermore a Shakepearean quotation always adds a little class to a new film.

By virtue of its impressive subject matter, however, "The Longest Day" is in a class by itself. The Zanuck *opus* has handled well the complicated events of D-Day —with respect for the momentous undertaking, and with cinema that captures the large-scale sweep of the whole invasion. The scene jumps back and forth in occupied France with the French Resistance in action, the Germans waiting developments, and Field Marshal Rommel's realization: "The first twenty-four hours of the invasion will be decisive. For the Allies as well as Germany, it will be the longest day." The scene moves to England, to the poised Allied troops, to the fateful decision of General Eisenhower (Henry Grace) in spite of the foul weather. And then it moves back to France with the airborne troops and paratroopers preparing the way in the dark, and eventually the landing crafts on the Normandy Beaches in the gray dawn on June sixth. All this is portrayed in a big way with vast panoramas as the camera skips from beach to beach, catches the onslaught as a whole and moves in on individual bloody combat—with death, destruction, heroism, confusion on the shore and in the interior.

In spite of its spectacular battle scenes, enormous scope and frequent change of scene, "The Longest Day" has an amazing clarity. Credit for this must go to producer Zanuck and his staff, probably one of the largest ever gathered for a movie. Besides the three directors who handled the British, American and German episodes, the three directors of photography and their assistants who shot the film in effective black-and-white, and the large number of people in charge of costumes, sets, editing, sound, etc., there is an imposing array of international big brass who served as military and technical consultants. And besides the very impressive list of international stars in the cast and hundreds of extras, there were enough *bona fide* American soldiers in the landing scenes to cause the Pentagon to think twice about this kind of co-operation with Hollywood in the future.

The logistics of "The Longest Day" must have got almost as complicated as those of the real D-Day. But credit should also go to Cornelius Ryan who wrote the good script from his own book on the invasion. Ryan is not Shakespeare, but he was successful in giving the picture unity even while the cameras jumped so often from place to place.

Although "The Longest Day" is well organized and successfully conveys the vastness of the invasion, the importance and great death-toll of the Allied victory, and the feel of "Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more," the film is less fortunate in catching characterization and the details of little scenes. The film's use of an elaborate cast of well-known stars is more than a costly publicity stunt. The familiar faces help us in identifying the characters during battle and oft-changing scenes. The officers come through best: John Wayne as Lt. Col. Benjamin Vandervoort, Robert Mitchum as Brig. Gen. Norman Cota, Robert Ryan as Brig. Gen. James M. Gavin, Werner Hinz as Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, Peter Van Eyck as Lt. Col. Ocker, and especially Curt Jurgens as Maj. Gen. Gunther Blumentritt (although the Germans seem rather befuddled about what's going on throughout most of the picture). Strangely enough, the British officers come through dully or as comedy relief. Peter Lawford as Lord Lovat and Kenneth More as Capt. Colin Maud, may give accurate portraits, but one cannot take them seriously. The film's worst scene is between Edmond O'Brien as Gen. Raymond O. Barton and Henry Fonda as Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt who insists that he be allowed to land, in spite of great danger, with the men on Utah Beach.

"The Longest Day" is not a documentary. It is a recreation of June 6, 1944; even so it keeps fiction to a minimum. Unfortunately the script seems to care least about the little men, the fighters who do the tough work, who kill, are wounded, and die. Most of the big-name actors in these roles are wasted, but a few manage to establish a least some vague characterization—especially Red Buttons in a confused comic-tragic episode and Jeffrey Hunter as a heroic sergeant. Richard Beymer, after a silly, poorly-edited pre-battle scene with a rosary, turns up later in several episodes as a private separated from his outfit and has a poignant interlude beside the body of a dead German and a badly wounded RAF pilot (Richard Burton). The day is practically over, and the pilot says, "Funny, isn't it? He's

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dead, I'm crippled, you're lost." And Beymer replies, "I wonder who won."

Again and again, the picture conveys the confusion of battle, the horror of death. Although unusually realistic (with its sound effects and near-newsreel photography) the film is not morbid in its excessive slaughter. I wish the realism (further heightened by the French and Germans speaking their own languages, which are translated by subtitles) could have been carried even farther in establishing the character of more of the hard-working soldiers and by introducing a few Negroes. But with "The Longest Day" as a spectacular re-creation, I have little complaint. Commenting on the invasion, Curt Jurgens as Blumentritt says, "We are witnessing something that will always look incredible to historians, and yet it is completely true." So it will seem to the viewer of this three-hour film. But to get back to Shakespeare: "He that outlives this day and comes safe home will stand a tip-toe when this day is named."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

CORRESPONDENCE

High School or Grammar School?

Shrub Oak, N.Y.

TO THE EDITORS: May I make a comment concerning "A Hard Choice," James O'Gara's recent piece on the Detroit N.C.E.A. debate concerning the preferability of using Catholic educational resources in grammar school or high school? Let me first say that I considered it very balanced, and that we just don't know the answers to this thing. All sorts of arguments pro and con can and must be made.

My own personal preference would be to go along with the advocates of emphasizing the high school. I would certainly far prefer to teach the youngster capable of understanding an idea. I'd far prefer to deal with a youngster who is in various stages of life's crises, rather than youngsters in knee pants simply waiting to be told things. The high school solution makes a lot of sense in terms of finance, manpower, and the sort of products that presumably and hopefully we would end up with. But there is solid reason for caution.

It's the old question about what makes logical sense and psychological sense, I am afraid, and I fear that from the viewpoint of that aspect of reality which is psychological, often enough below the rational level, we would be losing an awful lot if we gave up the influence which we have in the socialization process of the youngsters in the lower grade level. I say this for two reasons: first, I am thinking, of the study that Father John Thomas, S.J. reported several years ago concerning religion in the lives of first graders in Catholic schools (*Social Order*, May 1951). The study involved some twenty thousand first-grade youngsters in Catholic schools around the country. The sampling was done according to proper scientific norms, and so forth.

Father Thomas had adopted a few simple little doctrinal symbols—the crib, the crucifix, creation story, etc.—as well as simple religious practices—the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Sign of the Cross, grace before meals—and reported on how many first-graders were at all acquainted with those symbols and practices. These were youngsters, remember, who were sent by Catholic parents to Catholic schools, and I suppose a somewhat legitimate assumption would be that they would represent in general a somewhat higher cut of Catholic parents across the land. The study showed that within variation from twenty-five to forty per cent in key matters these youngsters achieved an average of roughly thirty-three per cent, across the board, in acquaintance with or knowledge of the symbols and practices. In other words, only one out of three youngsters from Catholic homes in first grade in Catholic schools had ever received any idea about these elements of the Catholic life. I very much fear that were there no Catholic schools on the elementary level, the proportion of religious illiteracy and disinterest would rise horrendously.

There is, of course, the other consideration, that of the ingredients of the early socialization process. We might laugh and have some sardonic remarks about the immaturity involved in "yes, Sister . . ." "Sister said . . ." "Sister wants . . .," *etc.* But I think we have to recognize that basic familiarity, basic loyalty, basic interest and respect for things Catholic and religious, do, as a matter of historical fact, derive from this early association with the Catholic grammar school environment and personnel. Unquestionably much of this is lost in later years through leakage, through non-exploitation and non-development, but it strikes me that there is a groundwork laid which *a*) prepares for future growth, and *b*) provides a basic orientation that is never lost completely. Aside from the truly convinced, dedicated, and responsible parents, I wonder how many would be that interested in sending their youngsters to the Catholic school in later years, having got used to the idea of the public school, in which the youngsters would have built their friendships, their relationships, their ideals, objectives and values.

Of course, we don't know the answer to this one. It's just that I have some reasons for anxiety, if we presume to set up a vacuum without having something that not only can be placed in its stead, but as a matter of practical fact would be. I refer therein, of course, to a type of parental responsibility.

(Rev.) JOSEPH SCHUYLER, S.J.

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America and The Commonweal

West Baden Springs, Indiana

TO THE EDITORS: It is always interesting when Commonweal and *America* disagree. That this can and does occasionally happen is an encouraging symptom of the intellectual health of American Catholicism.

Still, as I recalled your co-feature article in the July 27 issue ["The Forbidden Prayer," by William B. Ball], your editorial "On Warning Jews" [Sept. 7] took me a bit by surprise. I would have thought that, had you agreed with Mr. Ball's efforts to point out "the bankruptcy to which legal perfectionism, one-hundred-per-center pressure tactics and a fictional history of disestablishment have now led us," you would have found no difficulty with *America's* suggestion that the Jewish community do a little talking about whether or not pressure and legal perfectionist groups like the American Jewish Congress' Commission on Law correctly image its own ideas.

Certainly the question is worth asking. A few weeks before the Supreme Court decision, Milton Himmelfarb asked the question in *Commentary* (published by the American Jewish Committee). He said: "In opposing both what is sectarian and what is unsectarian, divisive religion and common-denominator religion, Jews run the risk of sounding like the lord mayor who promised, upon taking office, that he would be neither partial, on the one hand, nor impartial on the other. When you say things like that, it is hard to convince people that you are serious, or at any rate that you are saying what you really mean. The Jews argue that they are all for religion and religious education, but at home, in the synagogues, and in the religious school, not in the public school.

Why that viewpoint must mean opposition to a brief unsectarian prayer is hard to see. Religious people, especially if there is no sectarian issue, should surely agree that children, parents, teachers, and country need repeated prayers for God's blessings. Whatever we say, what we do proves that our heart is in a strict interpretation of the First Amendment's no-establishment clause." ("In the Community," *Commentary*, May, 1962, p. 432.)

A recent nationwide poll reports that by far the majority of Americans disagreed with the Court's decision. Does this mean a disagreement with the Jewish community? Not at all, certainly not until it becomes clear that the Jewish community's mind on the matter is truly expressed by groups like the American Jewish Congress' Commission on Law. I hope this will not become clear, but if it should—the silence of Jewish spokesmen could suasively do it—we would still have nothing but another phenomenon of group intellectual disagreement, not anti-Semitism. It would seem to be a mistake, on the other hand, to confidently outlaw the possibility of anti-Semitism arising from such a phenomenon. "Should" it and "could" it arise are two different questions. What is wrong, I wonder, with realistically pointing out a possibility? I for one would like to know if there are a good many in the Jewish community who share Mr. Himmelfarb's sentiments.

(Rev.) PATRICK J. HENRY, S.J.

South Bend, Indiana

TO THE EDITORS: I think the *America* editorial, "To Our Jewish Friends," muddled, its fear of Jewish power exaggerated and a revelation of the Catholic intellectual leadership inferiority complex, its reading as Jew-baiting unfortunate.

But the point remains that Dr. Pfeffer, the ACLU, POAU, and others are committed to an absolute view of separation—of short history in comparison to the long story of distinction but cooperation between Church and State in America—which they are determined to foist upon American society so that while the State may encroach upon the domain of family and church in education, "the wall" will prevent any realization of distributive justice or any relief from the already too heavy education costs of supporters of critically underfinanced and understaffed independent schools who cannot in conscience accept the secularization of education in state schools.

America was trying to say that for Dr. Pfeffer and his supporters to exploit a court favor of recent vintage without regard for distributive justice, demands of the common good (Kennedy: "to develop the talents of all our children"), and the freedom from coercion by secularists (or Catholics for that matter) essential in a pluralist state, is not only to do a disservice to democracy but to court alienation. And sufficient evidence of such militant exploitation was, in fact, presented as a part of the editorial.

WILLIAM SLAVICK
Chairman
South Bend Citizens for
Educational Freedom

3 September

july slept on the breath
so long and summer lies dead as labor
day death

in our early
evening paper
(the heart knows many

dyings)
one is credited to neighbor
Cummings

RAYMOND ROSELIEP

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The Meaning of Authority Today

Problems of Authority. Edited by John M. Todd. Helicon. $5.95.

by Daniel Callahan

FOR THOSE who enjoy imagining improbable situations, let them consider the following: a symposium in which a group of bishops, priests and laymen read papers to one another on the problem of authority. Naturally this symposium did not take place in America.

As it turns out, although the symposium was of course held in France, it was sponsored by Downside Abbey in England. Now these papers have been published in America. Taken together, they represent a very fruitful exchange by English and French clerics and laymen on the most delicate of all problems in the Church. Yet the most valuable thing about the collection is that it shows effectively how cloudy the notion of authority is today. More than that, it shows vividly that we have traveled quite a distance from the spirit of authority that prevailed in the early Church. Not only are we unclear on the meaning of the concept of authority, but we are no better off in our understanding of the practical role of authority in the Church.

This is not to suggest that the contributors to this collection are themselves confused about the nature of authority. On the contrary, they throw considerable light on it. But the result of their combined effort is to raise many unanswered questions, questions which I suspect most Catholics imagine had been answered long ago. For instance, Father Yves Congar, in a brilliant sketch of the history of authority in the Church, shows how her understanding of authority underwent a major and all but decisive shift during the middle ages. Through the early middle ages, the authority of the hierarchy was, on the one hand, understood primarily to be a moral one and, on the other, "a union between the hierarchical structure and the communal exercise of all church activities." Later, however, much of this early spirit was lost: the Church came to be conceived of as a "Supra-personal possessor of rights, a juridical personality enjoying a divine authority conceived as juridical. . . ."

If Father Congar is correct in his reading of history, then what are we to do today to regain the sense of community? Is it even possible? Let us hope so, since, as Father Congar argues, the idea of authority as mainly juridical in character introduced into the Church tensions which need never have arisen—in particular, a tension between clerics and laymen. In effect, once the Church began to insist on its "rights" it did so at the cost of obscuring the difference between herself and secular systems of government. If Canon Law did not entirely obliterate a living sense of community among all the faithful, from pontiff

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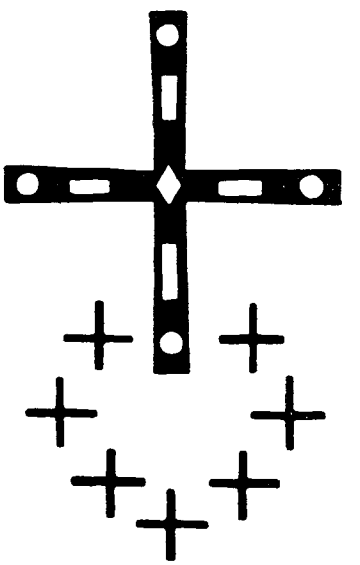

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to the lowliest layman, it certainly came close to it. To be sure, there were some compelling reasons why, during the middle ages, the Church had to establish its autonomous authority. Father Congar dates the decisive change from the time of St. Leo IX in the eleventh century, a time when the Church needed both freedom from lay coercion and a full-scale reform. But as with so many reforms, gain was in the long run balanced by loss.

It would perhaps be unfair to single out Father Congar's essay for special attention were it not that so many of the other essays seem merely to illustrate and develop some of his major points. Thus, John Todd's essay on "The Authority of the Layman" is an attempt to discover some sense in which the layman can be said to exercise authority in the Church.

Among other things, Mr. Todd believes the layman has authority by virtue of the sacrament of marriage and a special relationship to hierarchical authority through his talent for self-criticism. Yet as Mr. Todd himself recognizes, he is only putting forward a number of speculative theses. In the end he can only urge "that the layman must soon begin to have within the Church an authority which really complies with his priestly, royal and prophetic status. . . ."

Again, Archbishop Roberts' candid essay (with the appropriately candid title, "Naked Power: Authority in the Church Today") dwells on the fact of ecclesiastical secrecy. For with this secrecy goes both the danger, and often the reality of, an indifference to human rights in Church courts. "Are we," Archbishop Roberts writes, "in exercise of authority, too *possessive*, allowing too little to conscience, to personality? Are we too *personal* as to power sought? To power exercised? . . . The Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, very free with her 'Off with his head,' insisted on execution first, trial later. Funny in a world of clowning; not so funny in men pledged to commend the authority of Christ to the world by example."

One recalls, after reading these sharp words, Father Congar's description of St. Augustine's habit of revealing his episcopal secrets to the laity. And one remembers that, from time to time, inquiring laymen and priests are told that authority does not always have to make its reasons known. Archbishop Roberts does not say, of course, that authority *has* to make its reasons known. He simply says it is *good* for it to do so. Defenders of ecclesiastical privilege rarely seem to consider that important point.

By now, I hope I have made clear that *Problems of Authority* is an exceptional book. Indeed, there are few essays in it which are not of great value. Father George Tavard's treatment of "The Authority of Scripture and Tradition" provides a superb summary of the thesis that he and other theologians have been espousing for some years: "Scripture and Tradition are not two, but one." Moreover, his conception of the liturgy as the manifestation of this unity strikes me as a very valuable insight.

Of special interest at this moment is Father Peter Fransen's discussion of "The Authority of the Councils." In it he is particularly concerned with the manner in which conciliar decrees ought to be interpreted. Just how long it will be before the world can examine the decrees of the Second Vatican Council is any man's guess. But when the time comes, for that examination, Father Fransen's essay should prove exceedingly helpful.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to itemize all the essays in this symposium, many of them—those by Leclercq, Cameron, Nédoncelle and Grammont, in particular—being well worth extended attention. Let me conclude with some words from the essay by Pailler, the Auxiliary Bishop of Rouen. "The Church's ideal," Msgr. Pailler writes, "should be that of a community in which the mediatory function of hierarchical authority remains essential, but in which, *at the same time and by the same token*, the guidance of the hierarchy would be counterbalanced by the greatest possible degree of spiritual liberty. . . ." This is a grand and impressive ideal. There is work to be done.

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A Fine Talent

The Spoil of the Flowers. By Doris Grumbach. Doubleday. $3.95.

by Catharine Hughes

IN HER notebook for May 24, Ellen Acton wonders: "Why do I stand frozen and craven before any display of human emotion? Do I distrust it as melodramatic—or false? Or is it that I am inadequate to anything but the surface spoutings of polite, everyday intercourse?"

It is not stretching a point to say that, in these sentences, Doris Grumbach has given us the essence of *The Spoil of the Flowers*. Human isolation, the failure—and rejection—of attempts at communication, most of all, probably, the abdication of compassion. These are the characteristics of the faculty of Miss Hands' School for Girls. Ultimately, these are also the causes for the suicide of one of its members. But it would require something less than a ten-day exposure to contemporary fiction to discover that they are concerns not unique to this particular novel, or, for that matter, to the fiction of any particular period. As is always the case, then, it is on the treatment given the themes that the work must be judged. In this exceptional novel, Mrs. Grumbach reveals what is probably one of the finest fictional talents to appear recently.

The occasions when one comes upon a distinctive style in a first novel—or, for that matter, in a *twenty-first*—are infrequent enough. There are seldom more than three or four in a season, sometimes not even that. In the current year, Reynolds Price—once he abandons the Faulknerian postures of his first few pages—comes to mind. But how many others?

Doris Grumbach, on the basis of *The Spoil of the Flowers* must surely rank among them. While there are occasional echoes of Muriel Spark in her writing, and, here and there, a surprisingly Poe-like quality, there is a great deal more that is highly original.

If there are moments when the characters at Miss Hands' seem unpleasant enough to have been denied passage even on Katherine Anne Porter's occasionally leaky *Ship of Fools*, there are far more in which they become participants in a world in which we might prefer to deny our membership, but which our own experiences tell us we cannot. Though these campus inmates—from the ineffectual, desperately dependent Headmistress, that "anxious, feeble monarch hovering over the kingdom's strongest hero, threatened by self-doubts, but not wishing to abdicate," to the half-mad Millicent, who "seemed to be moving slowly, gracefully, like some fey creature in a dream ballet, around the gray telephone pole"—may on occasion (and perhaps we should be grateful for it) seem other than "real" in their varied abnormalities, it is impossible not to see in them the reflection of what they have been, what they might have been, and, as a consequence, to understand why they are as they are.

Miss Hands' is a carefully selected faculty. It is also one with a past sometimes even more interesting than its present. Once beyond a

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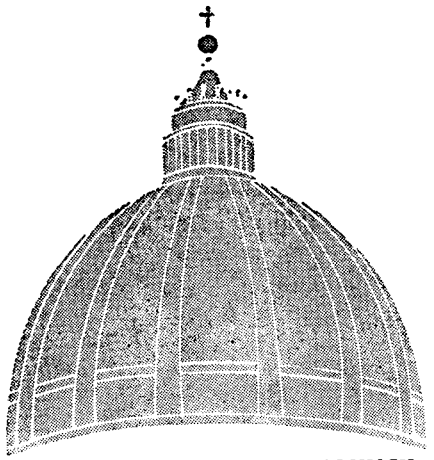

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perhaps too slowly paced opening, the flashbacks from that hot Saturday in May, the day of the suicide, are handled with a deftness it is improbable to expect in a first novel. Against its members' respective backgrounds, their petty successes and private and public failures, we move carefully, inexorably, toward the suicide of Sophie Seward. In one sense, their own desperations and inadequacies are played out on the taut string that is Sophie. From the inconsiderate students to the complaisant faculty, she at no point receives the one kindness, the one show of genuine interest that might have reclaimed her from defeat, disenchantment, failure and its recognition.

Even on the two occasions on which it seems possible that one of her fellow teachers, seeing Sophie's need, may sufficiently abandon her self-absorption to share the girl's pain, they will not—or cannot—do so. Jo, one-half of the campus' Lesbian "Twins," tries, but faced with her partner's displeasure, withdraws her effort. Ellen Acton can observe, "I ought to go up to see Sophie. She's probably still upset," only a few minutes before the suicide, but finds it "impossible."

It would be an omission to review *The Spoil of the Flowers* without remarking on one of its prime virtues: the use Mrs. Grumbach has made of Ellen Acton's notebook. What is too often merely a literary device here provides a highly effective and controlled—rather than contrived—means of character revelation. Ellen's literature-based reflections, the role of detached, almost studied, observer and cynic to which she seeks to consign herself, her essential, if submerged, Catholicism, are revealed with a fidelity to character which, in the novel's extraordinary concluding pages, attains unusual power.

These traits are some of the principal reasons why Ellen, faithful both to the role she has played throughout and to the evolution brought about by Sophie's suicide, can *believably* observe that "we are inextricably bound for the first time each to the other by the steel wires of a trenchcoat belt."

Toynbee's America

America and the World Revolution. By Arnold J. Toynbee. Oxford University Press. $4.75.

by Michael Harrington

ARNOLD TOYNBEE is a man not afraid of taking the long view. In his controversial study of history, he often regarded centuries as relatively small units of time. In *America and the World Revolution,* Toynbee remains a writer of the large perspective. His subject is a United States which was revolutionary in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which is conservative in the twentieth.

Toynbee is, I think, admirable when he defines the central issue before this nation: "I am maintaining that, since 1917, America has reversed her role in the World. She has become the arch-conservative power instead of the arch-revolutionary one. Stranger still, she has made a present of her glorious discarded role to the country which was the arch-conservative power in the nineteenth century, the country which, since 1946, has been regarded by America as being America's Enemy Number One. America has presented her historic revolutionary role to Russia."

This is well put and precise. Toynbee's sentiments are clearly in favor of taking immediate, positive action to see that the whole debate will not be wiped off the map by a thermonuclear war. His sympathy with the developing nations and his contempt for some of the ugliest aspects of affluence are unmistakable.

Yet Toynbee fails, really, to answer his own question. In taking the long view, he attempts to prescind from the surface of our political life, to understand the options in terms of massive historical movement. His failure is that he somehow remains a prisoner of that static present which he seeks to transcend.

For example, Professor Toynbee is a sharp critic of the "Ugly American" aspects of our foreign policy, i.e. of the personal and psychological stupidities, the high living standard of the American experts overseas, and so on. He passionately seeks the

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abolition of the Army PX abroad so that our nationals may be brought into some kind of living contact with the people they are supposed to serve.

Again, in another section, he is furious at the waste of productivity on "bogus wants" in the United States. To deal with this situation, he calls for the abolition of advertising (even toying with the idea of a consumer's strike against the huckstering media).

Yet, both the PX and the advertising industries are symptoms, not causes. The American proposition that resources shall be allocated on the basis of profit makes the creation of bogus wants desirable and inevitable so long as they bring in the dollars. The American PX is only the merest detail of an American economy which weighs heavily upon the developing nations and subordinates their destiny to ours.

This last mistake is crucial. Toynbee thinks that the United States has a unique Empire in that it pays money to, rather than extracting it from, its dependencies. Yet, as Gunnar Myrdal pointed out so soberly in his *International Economy*, the developing nations are still exporting capital to us. In part, this is because American aid is spent in America (and, as President Kennedy told the National Association of Manufacturers, it often costs the impoverished nations dear to shop in the Affluent Society). In part, it is because the very workings of the world market confer an enormous advantage on the technologically advanced nation, which receives an increasing price for its goods, while the developing nation is caught in a downward spiral.

In other words, I think Toynbee lacks a sense of the organic, institutional basis of America's conservative stance in a revolutionary world. It is not because we are individually stupid that we listen to advertisers: the snow-job is a fundamental mechanism of our economy. It is not insensitivity that makes us build PX islands overseas; it is an expression of a much deeper fact, of the reality of our domination over these peoples.

As a result of these analytic failures, Toynbee seems reduced to saying that the fundamental problem is ethical, that if only we had the will to become revolutionary, the way would be open. That is true, but only if one understands that a revolution in American international relations would first require a domestic one. We are abroad what we are at home, and what we are at home is a function of massive economic, social and historical determinants.

I make these criticisms grudgingly, since it is Toynbee's merit that he has brilliantly understood the question before us. I only wish I could report that he had made a real beginning in framing the answer. But *America in the World Revolution*, strangely enough, lacks a sense of history, an awareness of the enormous complexity involved when a nation makes a *volte-face*.

A Sense of Guilt

The Death of the Adversary. By Hans Keilson. Translated by Ivo Jarosy. Orion. $3.95.

by Alice Ellen Mayhew

HANS KEILSON is a German Jew who fled Nazi Germany in 1936; he was a member of the underground in Holland during the war and is now a psychoanalyst in Amsterdam. All these facets come to bear in this novel of Germany in the days just preceding the Third Reich, because Keilson contributes a remarkable psychological portrait and analysis of a young Jew caught in the implacable machine of the rising regime. And from an unusual point of view, that of the oppressed we get a superb discussion of guilt, that obsessive concern of post-Hitler Germany. What is immediately striking is the similarity of the guilt on both sides; that is what Karl Jaspers, in *The Question of German Guilt*, calls metaphysical culpability—the co-responsibility of each man for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his presence or with his knowledge.

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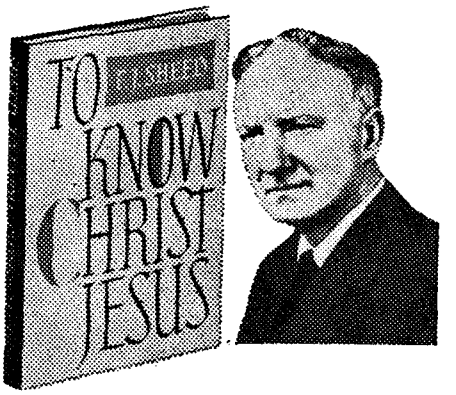

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chologically rooted to his fascination with the enemy, whom he knows shares his own nature and faults and whom he regards, at first, as redeemable. He learns when he is ten, through the whispers of parents and schoolmates, that he has an enemy, "B.", who is rising to power, and feels a strong tangible relationship to him: they *need* each other. B. needs an enemy to determine his own identity and to give an identity to his followers: this is what you are *not*. The hero, therefore, knows he is persecuted not because he is guilty of an act, but because "he is . . . ."; he is guilty of being.

Who gave B. his power? The hero's father, one of the oppressed, feels a "very personal guilt that everything happened as it did." He recognizes that political responsibility lets no man dodge. The hero, though he loves his father, also hates him for tying him to the chain of the inescapable with words like, "Accustom yourself to it." (Passivity, Jaspers says, knows itself morally guilty of every failure.) The hero sees himself accused by an acquaintance of betraying human solidarity, by his lack of fellowship, of regard for their common fate.

Along with these stages of guilt, the hero passes through intense emotional experiences through the agency of his enemy. He loses companions, friends, hopes, parents, physical security, the comradeship of fellow sufferers. He sees B.'s lunacy and recognizes hate and the destruction of justice as a crack that runs through all of human nature. Yet he is building up the same species of hatred in himself—weak, dishonorable, cowardly. Since he had decided not to fight back with the aggressor's methods, he had felt morally superior to both persecutor and persecuted. But now he becomes fascinated by the similarity of hatreds: "When I appear to my enemy as he appears to me, clothed in the paraphenalia of enmity, the roots of our nature are laid bare." For he has recognized that tormentor and tormented share the same fears, that the wolves are more nearly in the hands of a higher power than the elks are in the wolves'.

He watches his enemy, B., go by in a triumphal parade. Then he sees the implacability of his adversary's hatred, that there can be no turning back, no last-minute conversions, no jubilant reconciliations. He imagines that he is a man of action and that he shoots B. "I did not think: now I'll shoot, I hate him, I am shooting him down. No, I killed him in myself."

What he has killed is the false identification, sympathy, fascination, and bogus hope. He loses the last drop of love that made emotional hate possible. In recognizing the necessity of fighting evil, he has finally admitted that impotent submission and anxious omission of action weigh upon him as moral guilt.

Keilson is clearly an existentialist —I have noted the similarities with Jaspers' views—who demands resistance to evil on both sides of the barbed wire. This aspect may certainly be controversial if one interprets it as a judgment, but it is much more a marvelous study of one man's mental anatomy. Keilson's portraits of a group of Hitler youth, and several glimpses of the Leader himself talking to the people (whom he left half dead with tension and excitement); his accounts of the contagion of contempt, the hysteria of rancor and the paralysis of a population under this onslaught, are quick and sure as a knife-thrust. This is a remarkable book, which should be widely known.

Order Amidst Chaos

Men and Nations. By Louis Halle. Princeton University Press. $4.75.

by Ronald Steel

THE SEARCH for order in a chaotic world has been a constant theme of philosophy. It has also been the goal of artists—from Praxiteles to Mozart to Proust. By and large, the artists have been more successful, perhaps because their canvas, so to speak, is smaller, their vision more concentrated on a single phenomenon, their ambition narrower, and thereby less diluted by the quest for universality. Artists have sought not so much to explain the essence of man as to capture it. Yet in doing so, those with

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the rare gifts of vision and skill have managed to capture—almost by indirection—something central to the human condition. This does not mean that artists are philosophers—few things are more destructive of art than didacticism—but rather that in their effort the two are not so different.

Both art and philosophy are parts of the same thing—the search for meaning. This is the assumption underlying Louis J. Halle's exercise in political philosophy, *Men and Nations:* "... if I had begun my inquiry with questions concerning the nature of civilization, or with questions concerning the meaning of art, or with questions of religious experience, I would have arrived at the same philosophy. I would have arrived at it if I had set out, simply, to discover the meaning of life." These sentences from his Preface sum up the theme of a work which ranges over the entirety of human experience to explain why men behave as they do. His search is for a philosophy—of life no less than of history—and although cast in the framework of political theory, it is an exploration of human motivation.

"It has long been evident," he writes, "that the philosophical consensus which supports civilization has broken down since the 18th century. The premises that once had general acceptance no longer provide a basis for mutual understanding among men and nations. . . . The confusion prevails within our own world, within the world that calls itself free but is in doubt about the philosophical bases of freedom." From this point of departure Halle resumes the great tradition of political philosophy—a tradition disrupted by the collective folly of two cataclysmic wars, the hydrogen bomb and the uneasy atomic truce of the cold war. In our century man has seemed to function without reason, to have become a victim of his own self-destructive impulses. If he has become his own executioner, with ideological slogans on his lips, it is worth asking what reduced him to this state, and what can redeem him from it?

In seeking an answer to the paradoxes of political behavior, Halle

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brings an inquiring mind, a commitment to humanism, an abhorrence of cant, and an eloquent style. For more than 13 years he served in the Department of State, leaving the Policy Planning Staff in 1954. During his diplomatic career he became associated with that small group of men who for a time played a major role in shaping American foreign policy: George Kennan, Paul Nitze, and Charles Burton Marshall. And like Kennan, Halle has become one of the most trenchant critics of that policy. His articles from Geneva, where since 1956 he has been a professor at the Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, have been marked by the lucidity and intelligence that are so apparent in his latest book.

Men and Nations is an enquiry into the bases of human behavior. Halle's thesis is that we inhabit two worlds at once—a world of perfect ideas and an imperfect actual world which imitates it. We live in both simultaneously, but the world of ideas governs our conduct in the visible world. It is the disparity of the two that is the source of trouble in our personal lives and in the structure of our societies. The relation between this primary world of ideas (which Halle calls the *Logos*) and the existential world is that between perfection and its imperfect copy. It is the *Logos* which enables us to conceive of order as distinct from chaos, to order experience into meaningful associations, to reason.

Living in these two worlds at once is man's inescapable dilemma. Our goal must be, like a circus performer with a foot on two horses, to bring the two as close together as possible. To try to live exclusively in either is, according to Halle, to engage in self-delusion. Those who deny any reality but the physical, continue to be influenced by the primary world of ideas, since every judgment of imperfection must rest upon a prior conception of perfection. "The abandonment of the quest for the *Logos* in favor of existential satisfactions is the road to perdition," and . . . "its increasing domination of our thinking . . . resembles the cultural evolution that marked the transition from the glory that was Greece to the in-

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creasingly sordid grandeur that was Rome."

In a world without stability, we cling to symbols—the flag, capitalism, Communism—to organize the flux of existential reality in which we otherwise might sink. So too, men fight wars for symbols whose meaning they conceive only dimly. These symbols, important as they are for ordering reality, become tyrannical when they replace existence. If the idea is substituted for the real, then the real becomes of secondary importance. Thus it becomes possible—by distorting Plato, Rousseau or Marx—"to degrade individuals and to inflict unspeakable suffering upon them for the sake of the concept that has been put in their place."

Only by accepting the tension of duality, Halle contends, can we hope to deal with the problems of human society. "We men can practice toleration of diversity only when we think of ourselves as searchers, all searching alike for a truth of which we have intimations, but that none of us has yet found. Then any issue must be merely that of opinion against opinion. But where we conceive an issue to be that of truth against error we cannot practice toleration; for the righteous may not tolerate the wicked, the spokesman of God may not tolerate the servants of Satan."

Marked by humility and a spirit of free enquiry, this short book of political philosophy (116 pages of text followed by a hundred-odd pages of "amplifications") offers no final answers to the problems that have troubled man since the beginning of social existence. But it does offer a penetrating insight into our common condition by a man whose integrity merits our appreciation.

REVIEWERS

Daniel Callahan is Associate Editor of The Commonweal.

Catharine Hughes, a frequent contributor, has had one play produced and is now at work on her first novel.

Michael Harrington, whose articles on "Catholics in America" were recently featured in the New York *Post,* is author of *The Other America.*

Alice Ellen Mayhew is on the staff of a well-known New York publishing house.

Ronald Steel has written on international affairs for a number of American journals.

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